United Nations

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General says in annual report on work of Organization that 1991 was the year when most United Nations operations were mounted.

- Security Council holds consultations to discuss allegations of Iraqi refusal to allow team of Special Commission of Iraqi Disarmament to inspect weapon sites.

- Iraq returns valuable items removed from Kuwait's national library with assistance from United Nations team.

- Secretary-General finds that progress towards ending apartheid in South Africa, although "halting", has remained on course.

- Security Council refers applications of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania to Committee on Admission of New Members.

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In his annual report for 1991 on the work of the Organization, issued today at Headquarters, the Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said that never before had the United Nations gained so many new insights about the varied tasks of peace-keeping or peace-making in various troubled parts of the world such as Namibia, Haiti, Angola, Nicaragua and most notably in Central America, particularly in El Salvador.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar went on to say that during the period under review, the Security Council had taken action of extraordinary consequence to reverse the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and to deter aggression in the future. It had authorized the use of force on a national and coalition basis. However, he said, the experience of operations in the Gulf suggested the need for a collective reflection on the question of the future use of powers vested in the Security Council under Chapter VII.

The Secretary-General also stressed on what preventive diplomacy by the United Nations was required. The main problem today, he said, was the same as before: the lack of means at the disposal of the world body to maintain an

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impartial and effective global watch over situations of potential and incipient conflict. He stated that the pool of information available to the Secretary-General is "wholly inadequate".

Deprived of access to the technological means, it was hard to visualize how the Secretariat would monitor potential conflict situations from a clearly impartial standpoint. Furthermore, he said, it was hardly comprehensible that Governments impose far-reaching and costly responsibilities on the Organization, as they judge they must, but were themselves unwilling to fulfil corresponding financial obligations. He said that at the time of writing the report, the level of outstanding contributions to the regular budget was over $800 million, and only 49 Member States had fully paid their annual contributions.

Speaking about the human rights situation in the world, the Secretary-General noted that, although there had been legitimate satisfaction at providing the world community with the International Bill of Human Rights, indiscriminate use of power was still being used to brutalize populations into submission.

He also mentioned the sustained efforts being made over decades to end apartheid in South Africa as evidence of the profound and active concern of the United Nations with eradicating racial segregation and persecution. However, he said, in many instances the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations had been a helpless witness rather than an effective agent for checking human wrongs.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar further observed that one of the main sources of chronic instability in the world was the militarization of human society. He said that in the present political context there were new perspectives for weaving collective approaches in the field of arms limitation and disarmament more tightly into the fabric of peace-making and conflict control. The opportunities now presented to us are not likely to remain indefinitely open, he said.

Speaking about the overall economic situation, the Secretary-General stressed that, while some regions of the world had enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, others, mostly developing countries, had suffered a decline in their economic standing. It was clear, he said, that what was needed was a renewal of the commitment arrived at in the compact between African countries and the international community five years ago. There was no greater human and economic imperative that to initiate and implement plans for creating conditions that would allow sustainable development in the entire developing world, especially in Africa.

On the environmental issue, the Secretary-General said that the Conference on Environment and Development - scheduled for June 1992 in Brazil - represented a test of the willingness of Governments to adopt long-term policies on matters of vast significance to human well-being - even survival.

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Mobilizing new and adequate financial resources to support sustainable development and agreement on terms for the transfer of technology would need focused attention.

The Secretary-General stated that it had been his privilege to serve the Organization during what had generally been regarded as some of its most productive years. Throughout the latter period, he said, he had felt compelled to dwell on problems that were still to be resolved than "to muse on accomplishments". Those problems included initiatives to overcome serious difficulties in averting conflicts, eradicating poverty and protecting human rights.

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The Security Council held consultations this morning to discuss allegations that Iraqi authorities had refused to allow an inspection team of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament to fly its helicopters over an Iraqi weapon site.

United Kingdom Ambassador Sir David Hannay told correspondents, following the meeting, that the Iraqi action appeared to be completely inconsistent with the Security Council's resolution 707 (1991) of 15 August demanding that Iraq allow "full, final and complete disclosure of all weapon sites".

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With the assistance of a United Nations team, Iraq began today the return of valuable items removed from Kuwait's national library during its occupation of that country.

A United Nations spokesman announced that the handover of some 120,000 books and manuscripts was to take place at a designated site on the border of Saudi Arabia and Iraq near the Saudi town of Arar, in the presence of United Nations officials.

Iraq would subsequently begin returning items of Kuwait's National Museum to the United Nations team, a process which would take about three weeks. Iraq would also return aircraft engines and spare parts, items which have been designated "a priority" by Kuwait.

The transfer of gold bricks banknotes and coins had already been completed, the spokesman said.

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The Secretary-General has found that the process towards ending apartheid in South Africa, "although halting, remained on course" during the last 12 months. Mr. Pérez de Cuellar was commenting on the process of the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, in his second progress report on the implementation of the United Nations 1989 Declaration on Apartheid and Its Destructive Consequences.

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He noted that despite laws to remove apartheid, the socio-economic inequalities in South Africa, which still persisted, could jeopardize a process which would probably be "lengthy" and "vulnerable". The wave of violence in South Africa was a "serious obstacle to the evolving political dialogue" and the impartiality of the security forces was in question. The Secretary-General expressed hope, however, that the recent initiatives aimed at ending violence would allow the process of change to regain momentum.

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The Security Council this morning referred the applications for United Nations membership from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Committee on the Admission of New Members. The applications were submitted to the Secretary-General last week by the Permanent Representatives of France and the United Kingdom.

The Council will take a decision on the Committee's report on Thursday, 12 September.

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